Full Length Research Paper

Measuring organizational responses to the student complaints in the perceived justice framework: Some evidence from northern cyprus universities

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The main aim of the study is to determine what kind of complaints students have, how universities react to these complaints, and how relevant reactions affect justice perceptions, complainant satisfaction, exit and negative word of mouth intensions of the students. In order to find out students' perceptions on university responses to their complaints, the justice dimensions; procedural, interactional, distributive, from relevant services marketing literature, are utilized. Moreover, the effects of these perceived justice dimensions on students' complaint satisfaction, exit and negative word of mouth intentions are measured. Path analysis results show that all justice dimensions exert significant effects on complainant satisfaction, exit and negative word of mouth intensions. Discussions of the results, implications for university administrations for better marketing activities, limitations and avenues for future research are also presented in the study.

Key words: Student complaints, perceived justice dimensions, marketing, path analysis, Northern Cyprus Universities.

INTRODUCTION

Educational institutions now are widely accepted to be a part of service industry. Deming (Banwet and Datta, 2003) suggests that "improvement and management of education require application of the same principles that must be used for the improvement of any process, manu-facturing, or service". Mazzarol and Soutar (1999) add that "(tertiary education) remains a service, as capable of

treatment as any other in terms of marketing theory" (Kotze and du Plessis, 2003). On the other hand, the services provided in a higher education institution seem to be different from the ones in any other service sectors, in that they are much more complex in nature. As the joint declaration on higher education and the general agreement on trade in services (2001) suggests "higher education exists to serve the public interest and is not a 'commodity'… the mission of higher education is to contribute to the sustainable development and improve-ment of society as a whole…". Also, the definition of the end product and the target customer of this service are not as clear as those in the other sectors. In this regard Banwet and Datta (2003) state that despite the tradi-tional view which is accepted businesses that legislators, community members and alumni as customers of an educational institute, and students as a product of a col

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Abbreviation: CFA: Confirmatory factor analysis; COMSAT: Complainant satisfaction; DISTJUST: Distribu-ive justice; EU: European Union; EXINT: Exit intention; INTJUST: Interactional justice; NWOM: Negative word of mouth; PROJUST: Procedural justice; USD: United States dollar; WOM: Word of mouth; YOK: Council of Higher Education in Turkey.

lege or university, today, there is a consensus that the student is the primary customer of education services. They also cite Gold's (2001) statement which recommends that educational institutes focus on customer service, and regard their students as primary customers in order to truly focus on student-centred education.

Besides, quality assurance is now the main focus of all service sectors including the higher education institutions. In a Joint Declaration of the European Ministers of Education in Bologna (1999) one of the main four objectives is set as: "promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies".

Northern part of Cyprus does not have fully developed industry, and is trying to survive under harsh conditions imposed by existing embargos. Thus, education, among the existing three important economic sectors in the island - construction, tourism and education - is the one that provides the most important contribution to social, cultural, and economic fields. There are five universities in the Northern Cyprus which offer education to 32,500 students from 70 different countries. This means that 14.8% of the total population, which is 220,000 university students. In this regard, the universities contribute to the Island's promotion and image in two ways: on the one hand the graduates spread information to their native surroundings about the Cyprus, and on the other the universities' promotion programs help in promotion of the country which is not recognized internationally. Besides, higher education sector not only contributes to the improvement of local economy, but also educating the citizens, and creating and developing of the technological, social, political and cultural structures.

The increase in the number of private universities in Turkey as well as the other places in the world makes finding student in target markets more difficult than before. Moreover, new competitors from England, United States and even Southern Cyprus have appeared in Northern Cyprus, and have begun a proactive media promotion strategy to capture a share of the market. New investments in higher education sector create a serious threat which obviously requires careful decisions on marketing strategies, in retaining the present and gaining new students, more than ever.

Universities of north Cyprus, in general, are in the process of adaptation their systems to the requirements set by European Union (EU) in the field of higher education, and try to be a part of Erasmus program, stands for 'embodiment of the cosmopolitan intellectual' is a major higher education program lunched in 1987 with the aims of: introducing some standards, enhancing the academic quality and enriching the collaboration among the member institutions (Reding, 2006). One of the first considerations in quality assurance is to understand the needs and complaints of the students as the main costumers of this service sector and to have efficient systems in answering them. From an educational point of view, it

should be one of the first conditions for providing a student-centred education.

As, Dolinsky (1994) mentioned that, "complaints are of value to all organizations, but of greatest importance to organizations that primarily provide services which are potentially highly variable". Based on this statement it is obvious that examining consumer complaints behaviour in higher education institutions, which provide a highly variable range of services, and do it in a highly competitive environment, becomes an important tool in improving the quality of services provided. Dolinsky (1994) stated that efforts both to minimize and address student complaints are crucial for ensuring the success of a university.

This paper will focus on students' perception on university's responses to their complaints, through different justice dimensions and the effects of these on students' complaint satisfaction, exit and negative word of mouth intentions. Considering higher education as a service sector, the relevant literature on service marketing, and studies in other service sectors are utilized to form a base for a specific study of the area in the universities of northern Cyprus.

Although, many organizations target to provide flawless service, mistakes and failures are frequent occurrences. For this reason, service organizations need to analyze these occurrences systematically and generate effective remedies to the service failures and customer complaints through successful service recovery acts. By providing equitable and quick responses to customer complaints, service organizations aim to achieve a pool of satisfied customers and increase the level of repeat patronage. It can be claimed that the perceived justice by the customers in the process of failure recovery is one of the most significant factors creating the difference between a successful and an unsuccessful company (Schoefer and Ennew, 2005). Moreover, it has been proven that this evaluation of justice is one of the criteria for after purchase evaluation of the company by the customers and has a direct effect on the perceived quality of the company, repurchase intention, and positive or negative word of mouth (WOM) (Bitner, 1990; Hoffman et al., 1995; Smith et al., 1999; Davidow, 2000; Mattila, 2001; Karatepe and Ekiz, 2004; Kotler and Armstrong, 2006).

Companies' procedures (methods) of handling custommer complaints and their effort in service recovery, affect the customers' satisfaction of services and their loyalty to the companies. While a successful service recovery increases the customer satisfaction, repurchase or revisit intention and positive or negative word of mouth, an unsuccessful trial of service recovery creates a second negative effect, multiplying the effects of the first failure on the customer (Tax and Brown, 1998; Hoffman and Bateson, 1997). There are many studies available on perceived justice, and especially on its effects (Blodgett et al., 1993; Blodgett et al., 1997; McCollough, 2000; Maxham III and Netemeyer, 2002). In literature survey

done, no study on this subject in northern Cyprus and Turkey especially in the field of education was found. In this respect it is believed that this study will contribute to the existing literature. In the scope of this research, first, studies relevant to service failure, complaint and after purchase consumer behaviors have been reviewed. Then the research model and hypothesis to be tested in the survey have been developed. The study continues with the presentation of research methods and investigation of findings. The study ends with discussion, research limitations and implications and suggestions for universities' administrations.

Literature

Service failure

A number of problems take place in service encounters due to the inherent variability feature of services. Although, service organizations attempt to take precautions in order to minimize specific problems in service encounters, they are unlikely to prevent the incidents such as occasional late flight, burned steak, or missed delivery (Hart et al., 1990). In the related literatures, these problems are named as "service failures". A systematic examination of the service marketing literature demonstrates that there exist two types of service failures named as outcome failure and process failure (Bitner et al., 1990; Hoffman et al., 1995). While outcome failure refers to what customer actually receives from the service, process failure is related to the manner in which service is delivered to a customer (Smith et al., 1999).

When the service marketing literature is analyzed, it can be seen that customer reactions to service failures is divided into three main categories regardless to its type or magnitude; loyalty, complaining and exit (Singh, 1988; Zemke, 1994; Conlon and Murray, 1996; Sundaram et al. 1997; Lewis and Spyrakopoulos, 2001; Ekiz, 2003; Kelly et al., 1993). Best and Andreasen (1977), in their frequently cited article, report that "when a service related problem is recognized, possible customer responses include inaction, voicing the complaint to a seller, consciously deciding to transfer patronage (exit), and presenting a dispute to a third-party complaint handler". In a similar way, service failures can cause a number of different reactions in customers' attitudes including affective responses (satisfaction and anger), cognitive responses (attributions of causality, quality, and disconfirmation), and behavioral intentions (intention to complain, intentions to exit, repurchase intentions, and word-of-mouth communication) (Hess, 1999).

Customer complaints

When service failures take place, customers are likely to complain about these incidents. Complaining can be defined as a formal expression of dissatisfaction with any aspect of a service experience (Lovelock and Wright, 1999). Singh (1988) proposed that intentions to complain consist of multiple dimensions which include complaining to the organization and ask for a sort of compensation (psychological, financial, or both at the same time), complaining to the external constituencies or close social contact group (negative communication to friends, colleagues, neighbors, and relatives) and complaining to a third party (writing complaint letters, contacting customer protection offices, or even taking legal action).

Even though, the total body of consumer complaining behavior research is quite large and diverse (Garrett et al. 1991; Gilly and Hansen, 1992; Boshoff, 1999), it can be roughly divided into three main areas:

Antecedent conditions: Some researchers have been concerned with understanding the circumstances that may eventually result in customer complaints. Researchers either tried to identify complaints by product classes which may cause consumers to complain (Best and Andreasen, 1977), or focused on the social, psychological, and economic factors that may explain why consumers became dissatisfied and chose to complain (Folkes, 1984).

Procedural actions: Researchers either analyzed the complaining issue from the consumers' perspective (Singh, 1988; Bearden and Oliver, 1985), or from the organizations' perspective (Gilly and Hansen, 1992; Fornell and Westbrook, 1984).

Outcome conditions: Lastly, some researchers have investigated the outcomes, both from the consumers' and organizations' perspectives. From consumers' perspective, outcomes may be satisfaction, dissatisfaction and future consumption decisions, complaining, or exit (Gilly and Gelb, 1982). On the other hand, from the organizations' perspective, outcomes may be effective complaint management system, which can enhance corporate profitability (Fornell and Westbrook, 1984).

In total, "this body of research regarding antecedent conditions, procedural actions, and outcome conditions has greatly expanded our knowledge of consumer complaining behavior" (Garrett et al., 1991). Since complaint-handling process is a strategic tool, service organizations need to establish appropriate complaint mechanisms. Research indicates that ineffective resolved complaints may lead to dissatisfaction, negative word of mouth, and non-repeat business (Blodgett et al., 1997; Gilly and Gelb, 1982; Zemke and Bell, 1990; Plymire. 1990).

Service recovery

Service recovery is a well-accepted term for what service companies attempt to offset the customers' negative reaction to the service failures. It includes all the actions that should be made by companies in order to move a customer from a state of disappointment to a state of satisfaction (Bell and Ridge, 1992). In other words, service recovery processes are those activities in which a

company engages to address a customer complaint regardng a perceived service failure (Spreng et al., 1995).

Service recovery, or putting right what has gone wrong, is crucially important (Bailey, 1994). One reason of this is that it costs several times as much to create a new customer as it does to keep and satisfy and existing one (Lovelock, 2000; Kotler, 2003). The other reason is that customer satisfaction and loyalty is much greater after a problem has occurred and been put right than it was before the problem occurred (Bailey, 1994). What can be understood from these points is that, customers are aware of the fact that up to a certain level mistakes can happen but they demand timely, fair, courteous, clear, efficient, and interactive solutions.

Hoffman and Bateson (1997) suggest five good responses to service failures. These responses are as follows: First, acknowledge the problem - customers need to know that their complaints are being heard. Second, make the customer feel unique or special - convey to customers that their opinions are valued and their business is important to the firm. Third, apologize when appropriate - when the failure is clearly the fault of the firm, a sincere apology is often an effective form of recovery. Fourth, explain what has happened - providing the customer with extra information about events that led to the failure. This conveys that the firm feels the customer is of value and that his or her understanding of events is important. Finally, offer to compensate - compensation is often the most desired response by customers, but firms tend to forget the hidden costs associated with the service failure, such as time and frustration.

Perceived justice

Perceived justice suggests that the recovery process itself; the outcomes connected to the recovery strategy; and the interpersonal behaviors enacted during the recovery process and the delivery of outcomes are all critical in recovery evaluation (Hoffman and Kelly, 2000). For this reason, researchers frequently use the justice dimensions to further explain the relationship between service recovery activities and post purchase customer behaviors (Blodgett et al., 1997; Davidow, 2003a; Ekiz et al., 2005; Karatepe, 2006).

Justice theory, as cited on McCollough et al. (2000), derived from Adam's, 1963, equity theory and Festinger's, 1957, theory of cognitive dissonance. On one hand, equity theory, as a psychological theory, suggests that people will become angry when equity principles are violated, resulting people who experience, observe, or even create unfairness try to reduce their discomfort by trying to restore either physical or psychological equity (Goodwin and Ross, 1990). On the other hand, theory of cognitive dissonance states that disconfirmed expectations create a state of "dissonance" or psychological discomfort, if this discomfort occurs between product expec-

tations and product performance, consumers may try to reduce psychological tension by changing their perception of the product/service (Festinger, 1957; McCollough et al., 2000).

In his article, Davidow (2003b) defined perceived justice as "a sequence of events in which a procedure generates a process of interaction and decision making through which an outcome is allocated to someone" and concluded that there exist three dimensions of justice; distributive, interactional and procedural.

Procedural justice: Maxham III and Netemeyer (2002) defined procedural justice as "perceived fairness of policies and procedures involving the recovery effort", and they found anecdotal evidence suggesting that procedural justice affects service recovery outcomes. Hoffman and Kelley (2000) stated that procedural justice examines the process that is undertaken to arrive at the final outcome, hence they claimed that even though a customer may be satisfied with the type of recovery strategy offered, recovery evaluation may be poor due to the process endured to obtain the recovery outcome. Fairness of the policies and procedures by which the outcome is produced can be considered as a just procedure.

Interactional justice: Davidow (2003a) defined interactional justice as "fairness relating to interpersonal communications in the decision making process". Interactional justice refers to the manner in which the customer is treated during the recovery process and it includes; courtesy, empathy, politeness, concern and neutrality (Mattila and Patterson, 2004; Smith et al, 1999; Tax, Brown and Chandrashekaran, 1998). Collie, Sparks and Bradley (2000) concluded that interpersonal treatment during the conflict resolution process is perceived as a positive attempt to solve the problem and has important positive impact on overall justice perception of complainant in service recovery.

Distributive justice: The distributive justice focuses on the perceived fairness of outcomes of the service encounter, in other words, what specifically the offending firm offered the customer to recover from the service failure (Schoefer and Ennew, 2005; Blodgett et al., 1993). In a consumer complaint context, distributive justice refers to the perceived fairness of the policies and procedures used by the seller (Blodgett et al., 1997). "Distributive justice outcomes may be evaluated in terms of refunds, free gifts, coupons and offers to mend in response to inequity resulting from a service failure" (Karatepe, 2006).

Organizations providing ''just'' resolutions, in terms of policies, outcomes and interpersonal relationships, in their complaint handling practices are likely to achieve a pool of satisfied customers and increase the level of repeat patronage (Davidow, 2003b; Ekiz et al., 2005; Goodwin and Ross, 1990).

Post-Purchase behaviors

Post-purchase behavior is defined as "a series of steps in which consumers compare their expectations to perceived reality, experience consequent satisfaction / dissatisfaction, and then act in a way influenced by that satisfaction and dissatisfaction" (Gilly and Gelb, 1982). When customers praise the firm and express preference for the company over others, it means that they are likely to increase the volume of their purchases and disseminate a positive word of mouth communication, or oppo-site (Parasuraman et al., 1985).

Customer satisfaction: In his critical review, Yi (1990) proposes that there are three types of definitions of satisfaction as an outcome or as a process. These definitions include: "the buyer's cognitive state of being adequately or inadequately rewarded for the sacrifices he has undergone"; "an emotional response to the experiences provided by, associated with particular products or services purchased, retail outlets, or even molar patterns of behavior such as shopping and buyer behavior, as well as the overall marketplace"; and "the summary psychological state resulting when the emotion surrounding disconfirmed expectations is coupled with the consumer's prior feelings about the consumptions change" (Yi, 1990). "Satisfaction is the customers' overall affective feeling about the company as a result of the company's handling of the complaint" (Davidow, 2003a). Research indicates that an increase in complainant satisfaction leads to an increase in repurchase intentions (Cronin and Taylor, 1992). Specifically, Smith and Bolton (1998) suggest that complainant satisfaction leads to an increase in repurchase intentions and a decrease in negative WOM communication.

Exit and negative WOM communication intentions: Repurchase intent and WOM communication are considered to be salient consequences of complaint satisfaction in the post purchase behavior literature. Maxham III and Netemeyer (2002) defined WOM intent as "the likelihood that one would favorably recommend a firm's product or service after a failure and recovery effort", and purchase intent as "the degree to which customers intend to purchase a firm's products/services in the future". The term "word of mouth", WOM, is used to describe verbal communications, which can be positive or negative, between groups such as the product/service provider, independent experts, family and friends and the actual or potential consumers (Ennew et al., 2000). Since, cost of gaining a new customer usually greatly exceeds the cost of retaining a customer, managers are increasingly concerned with minimizing customer defections (Spreng et al., 1995) either in form of direct exit, or indirect due to disseminated negative WOM

Gilly (1987) stated that organizations respond to complaints in the hope that it can increase (or at least minimize any decrease in) repurchase behavior and found that complainant satisfaction to be related to repurchase intension more importantly actual repurchase.

Prior studies have suggested that high levels of complainant satisfaction are associated with increased repurchase intention and decreased negative WOM (Karatepe and Ekiz, 2004; Heskett et al., 1994; Davidow, 2000; Ekiz, 2003). Empirical research has demonstrated that satisfied complainants are more likely to have repurchase intentions and spread positive word-of-mouth communication (Blodgett and Anderson, 2000; Kelly et al., 1993; Ekiz et al., 2005; Maxham III and Netemeyer, 2002). Further more, a poor interaction with a rude representative or a bad policy while filing the complaint or a mismatch of cost and compensation at the end of the recovery process can cause negative WOM (Davidow, 2003b; Ekiz et al., 2005; Mattila and Patterson, 2004).

Based on the preceding discussion, the following model and hypothesis are proposed:

H_{1a}= Procedural justice will have a significant positive effect on complainant satisfaction.

H_{1b}= Procedural justice will have a significant negative effect on exit intention.

H_{1c}= Procedural justice will have a significant negative effect on negative WOM intention.

H_{2a}= Interactional justice will have a significant positive effect on complainant satisfaction.

H_{2b}= Interactional justice will have a significant negative effect on exit intention

H_{2c}= Interactional justice will have a significant negative effect on negative WOM intention.

H_{3a}= Distributive justice will have a significant positive effect on complainant satisfaction.

H_{3b}= Distributive justice will have a significant negative effect on exit intention.

H_{3c}= Distributive justice will have a significant negative effect on negative WOM intention

H_{4a}=Complainant satisfaction will exert a significant negative influence on exit intention.

H_{4b}= Complainant satisfaction will have a significant negative effect on negative WOM intention

H_5= Exit intention will exert a significant positive effect on negative WOM intention.

METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS

Sample

The population for this study included students who have been taking education in Northern Cyprus. The available secondary data provided from the five university's registration offices depicts that there are 32,451 students on the island. The biggest percentage of these students comes from Turkey, around 63.11% (20,483 students). The data has been collected from the respondents between April and June 2005 where a judgmental sampling approach was used for data collection. Judd, Smith, and Kidder (1991) define judgmental sampling or purposive sampling as "picking cases that are judged to be typical of the population in which we are interested, assuming that errors of judgment in the selection will tend to counterbalance one another". Research team collected the data from the students who had experienced some problems and reported them to the relevant university units during

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Students (n = 318)

Factor		F	%
Age	17-20	73	23.0
	21-24	213	67.0
	25-28	31	9.7
	33 +	1	0.3
Gender	Female	122	38.4
	Male	196	61.6
Program	Vocational School /Two Years	57	17.9
	Faculty / 4 Years	246	77.4
	Master Program	11	3.5
	Doctorate / PhD	4	1.3
Class level	1	102	32.1
	2	116	36.5
	3	78	6.3
	4	20	3.4
	Others	2	0.6
Disposable	**Less than 350 USD**	173	54.4
Income	350 - 699 USD	131	41.2
	700 - 1049 USD	8	2.5
	1050 - 1399 USD	4	1.3
	1400 USD and above	2	0.6

their learning processes. In order to keep the social bias at the minimum level, the questionnaires were personally distributed to the students, giving assurance for confidentiality. In addition, the demographic data were requested from the respondents in the final part of the questionnaire. Finally, the students were requested to fill out the questionnaires in a self-administered manner. Of the 500 questionnaires distributed, 318 usable questionnaires were retrieved with a response rate of 63.6 percent. The demographic characteristic of the students in the research content are shown in Table 1.

As can be seen from Table 1, the majority of the respondents (61.6%) were male. More than sixty-seven percent of the respondents were between the ages of 21 and 24. More than seventy five percent of the respondents had four year university education. Approximately, 69% of the respondents reported that they were first and second year students and already all of them 95.6% had less than approximately 770 US dollars monthly disposable income.

Measures

The current study employs the scale developed by Davidow (2003a). Furthermore, three items were taken from Blodgett et al. (1997) to measure the student's intentions of disseminating a negative word of mouth. The questionnaire items were originally prepared in English and then translated into Turkish by using back-translation method which involves the translation of the original instrument to the required language and re-translation of the modified instrument to the original language by someone else, finally comparing the original with the second time translated copy to find out whether there is a significant difference that can effect the meaning (McGorry, 2000). The cross-linguistic comparability of the questionnaire was further tested with the faculty members of a

Turkish university who were fluent in both languages. This was deemed necessary since the concern was not so much with a literal translation but with generating meaning which was as similar as possible to the original English version (Yavas et al., 2003). The translated questions have been applied to the higher education sector in northern Cyprus. The results of the pilot study suggested that there were no compelling reason to modify or delete any items in the questionnaire thus it can be accepted that the questionnaire's face validity is confirmed.

In the study procedural, interactional and distributive justices are used as independent variables while complainant satisfaction, exit intension and negative word of mouth communication are the dependent variables.

The first open ended question, in the first page of the quantitative survey was "what is the most important/latest complaint or complaints of yours to the relevant university unit? The common point endorsed regarding the biggest complaints among the students were inefficient dormitory services. In addition, they underlined other problems like slow internet connections within the campuses, insufficient infrastructure, inefficient transportation systems, ineffective academic advisory services and the irregularities and inconsistencies during the registration process together with the orientation activities of their universities.

Psychometric properties

In assessing the psychometric properties of the instrument; issues of reliability, dimensionality, convergent and discriminant validity have been considered. In order to provide support for the issue of convergent validity, corrected item-total correlations were computed (Table 2). The inter-item correlations being equal to or exceeding 0.32 provided support for the convergent validity of the scale (Tabachnick and Fidell, 1996). Reliability coefficients were also computed for each study variable. Overall, Alpha coefficient score was found to be 0.83 at the aggregate level, see Table 3. These findings show that each coefficient exceeds the cut-off value of 0.70 as recommended by Nunnally (1978), as were the cases with those of Davidow (2000), Yavas et al. (2003) and Karatepe and Ekiz (2004). Having done the reliability tests, a factor analysis was run using Varimax Rotation. Only one question; in the intention to exit construct; out of 18 was loaded less then 0.50 and it was omitted from the scale. Thus, the other constructs were adequately loaded onto six factors; distributive justice, procedural justice, interactional justice, complainant satisfaction, intention to quit and negative word of mouth (Nunnally, 1978). The scales' reliability is tested through the SPSS's reliability analysis. The resulting Alpha score was 76.95, which is considered to be acceptable (Tabachnick and Fidell, 1996).

In order to provide support for discriminant validity, Pearson product-moment correlations among the study variables were computed. For this purpose, composite scores for each dimension were calculated by averaging scores representing that dimension. In Table 2, the significant correlations among the study variables have been shown. The highest correlation occurred between distributive justice and complainant satisfaction (0.68) and reversely, the lowest correlation was found between interactional justice and negative WOM intention (-0.31). Means and standard deviations of dimensions composite scores are also calculated. Overall, these results provide additional support for the discriminant validity of the scale (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988).

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) seeks to determine if the number of factors and the loadings of measured (indicator) variables on them conform to what is expected on the basis of pre-established theory. CFA is used to test hypotheses corresponding to prior theoretical notions. The confirmatory factor analysis was established theory. CFA is used to test hypotheses corresponding to prior theoretical notions. The confirmatory factor analysis was

Table 2. Means, standard deviations, and correlations of study variables.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
Procedural Justice *(PROJUST)*	1.00					
Interactional Justice *(INTJUST)*	0.47**	1.00				
Distributive Justice *(DISTJUST)*	0.54*	0.52*	1.00			
Complainant Satisfaction *(COMSAT)*	0.57*	0.54*	**0.68***	1.00		
Exit Intention *(EXINT)*	-0.47**	0.41**	0.49**	-0.61*	1.00	
Negative WOM *(NWOM)*	-0.50**	**-0.31***	-0.57*	0.64*	0.53	1.00
Mean	3.43	2.99	3.19	3.55	3.45	3.40
Standard deviation	1.10	1.05	0.82	0.83	1.05	1.13

Notes: Composite scores for each measure were obtained by averaging scores across items representing that measure. The scores range from 1 to 5. A higher score indicates a more favorable response.
p<0.05 ** p<0.01

Table 3. Construct items, confirmatory factor analysis and cronbach's alpha.

Scale Items	Factor Loading	T-values	α
Procedural Justice *(PROJUST)*			
I felt that university policies allowed for flexibility in taking care of my complaint.	0.78	15.52	
I felt that the guidelines, used by the university to process my complaint, were fair.	0.79	15.96	
I believe that the university guidelines for listening to and to handling complaints are fair.	0.80	16.13	
Interactional Justice *(INTJUST)*		0.87	
I felt that the representative was very courteous.	0.78	15.85	
I felt that the concern shown by the representative was sincere.	0.82	16.96	
I felt like the representative really cared about me.	0.89	19.23	
Distributive Justice *(DISTJUST)*		0.88	
I am pretty happy with what the university gave me.	0.84	17.70	
I thought that the university solution was definitely acceptable.	0.86	18.37	
I think that the result I got from the university was appropriate.	0.83	17.57	
Complainant Satisfaction *(COMSAT)*		0.87	
In general, I have a good feeling about this university.	0.83	17.31	
My impression of this university has improved.	0.90	19.67	
I now have a more positive attitude towards this university.	0.78	16.05	
Exit Intention *(EXINT)*		0.81	
I will probably not continue my education in this university.	0.72	8.67	
I will probably switch to another university in the future.	0.79	9.93	
Negative WOM *(NWOM)*		0.84	
I do not say positive things about this university.	0.73	11.72	
I do not recommend this university to those who interested in my advice.	0.82	16.25	
I do not encourage my friends / relatives to study in this university.	0.88	17.62	
Results of Fit Indices:			
Chi-square / df	=3.45	NFI	=0.89
GFI	=0.88	NNFI	=0.89
AGFI	=0.83	RMR	=0.051
CFI	=0.92	RMSEA	=0.008

Notes: Five point Likert Scale was employed for each item (5= strongly agree - 1= strongly disagree). All items are significant at the 0.01 level. All Cronbach-alpha values, which depict reliability of the constructs, are greater than (α) 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978).

also employed to provide support for the issues of dimensionality, convergent and discriminant validity of the instrument (Joreskog and Sorbom, 1996; Yilmaz, 2004). Table 3 indicates a reasonable fit of the six-factor model to the data on the basis of a number of fit statistics. As also demonstrated in Table 3, the majority of the actor loadings are above 0.75, and all -values are significant that

Table 4. Path Analysis Results

Hypothesized	Standardized Parameter*	T-values**
Relationships	Estimates (ML)	
I. Impact on complainant satisfaction		
H1a: PROJUST → COMSAT	0.62	14.14
H2a: INTJUST → COMSAT	0.61	14.35
H3a: DISTJUST → COMSAT	0.64	15.57
Explained variance (R^2) = 0.456		
II. Impact on exit intention		
H1b: PROJUST → EXINT	-0.31	-4.51
H2b: INTJUST → EXINT	-0.24	-3.42
H3b: DISTJUST → EXINT	-0.20	-2.81
H4a: COMSAT → EXINT	-0.26	-8.73
Explained variance (R^2) = 0.713		
III. Impact on negative WOM intension		
H1c: PROJUST → NWOM	-0.30	-4.78
H2c: INTJUST → NWOM	-0.52	-9.84
H3c: DISTJUST → NWOM	-0.39	-7.01
H4b: COMSAT → NWOM	-0.37	-6.44
H5: EXINT → NWOM	0.43	6.58
Explained variance (R^2) = 0.529		

*Maximum Likelihood. ** P<0.01 not significant

are over two. Overall, these results provide support for the dimensionality, convergent and discriminant validity of the scale (Diamantopoulos and Siguaw, 2000; Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). The results of fit statistics of this study are similar to those of Davidow (2003), Gursoy and Ekiz (2006), Ekiz et al. (2005) and Karatepe (2006).

The hypothesized relationships were tested using LISREL 8.54 via path analysis (Joreskog and Sorbom, 1996). As it can be seen from the table test results, the results of the path analysis depicts that the model fits the data well. Thus, all the indices such as χ2 / df, GFI - Goodness of Fit Index, AGFI - Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index, CFI - Comparative Fit Index, NFI - Normed Fit Index, NNFI - Non-Normed Fit Index, RMR - Root Mean Square Residual, RMSEA - Root Mean Square Error of Approximation were found at the expected levels.

As for the assessment of the fit statistics of the scale, chi-square, GFI, AGFI, CFI, and RMR were taken into account. Kelloway (1998) defines the aforementioned fit indices as follows:

...the goodness-of-fit index is based on a ratio of the sum of the squared discrepancies to the observed variances. The GFI ranges from 0 to 1, with values exceeding 0.9 indicating a good fit to the data. Root means squared residual (RMR) is the square root of the mean of the squared discrepancies between the implied and observed covariance matrices. The lower bound of the index is 0, and low values are taken to indicate good fit.

...the adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI) adjusts the GFI for degrees of freedom in the model. The AGFI also ranges from 0 to 1, with values above 0.9 indicating a good fit to the data. X^2 /df ratios of less than 5 have been interpreted as indicating a good fit to the data as ratios between 2 and 5, with ratios less than 2 indicating over fitting Table 4.

Test of the hypothesis

The analysis shown in table 4 indicates that all three dimension of

justice, namely, procedural justice (estimates 0.62, t = 14.14 p<.01), interactional justice (estimates 0.61, t = 14.35 p<.01) and distributive justice (estimates 0.64, t = 15.75 p<.01) jointly have significant levels of impact (45.6%) on complainant satisfaction. Moreover, distributive justice has greater relative impact on complainant satisfaction than on procedural and interact ional justice. Thus, hypothesis H1a, H2a and H3a were supported. Meanwhile, the analysis show that distributive justice (estimates -0.20, t = 2.81 p<.01), procedural justice (estimates -0.31, t = - 4.51 p<.01), interactional justice (estimates -0.24, t =-3.42 p<.01) and complainant satisfaction (estimates -0.26, t = -8.73 p<.01) demonstrated a significant negative relationship and jointly explained 71.3% of variance in exit intention. The hypotheses; H1b, H2b, H3b and H4a were therefore supported. Finally, the results indicated that three justices mentioned and complainant satisfaction has significant negative relationship with negative word of mouth. The hypothesis; H1c, H2c, H3c and H4b, were therefore supported.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The current empirical study sets out to investigate the effects of justice perceptions on complainant satisfaction, exit intention and negative WOM communication. Moreover, the relationship among complainant satisfaction and exit intention and negative WOM communication are investigated. These results provide an important step forward in unraveling the intricate relationship between these five key constructs. The results show that procedural, interact ional and distributive justice reflect the core justice dimensions for explaining complainant satisfaction which involves student's feelings about complaint processes; impressions about the system improvement and
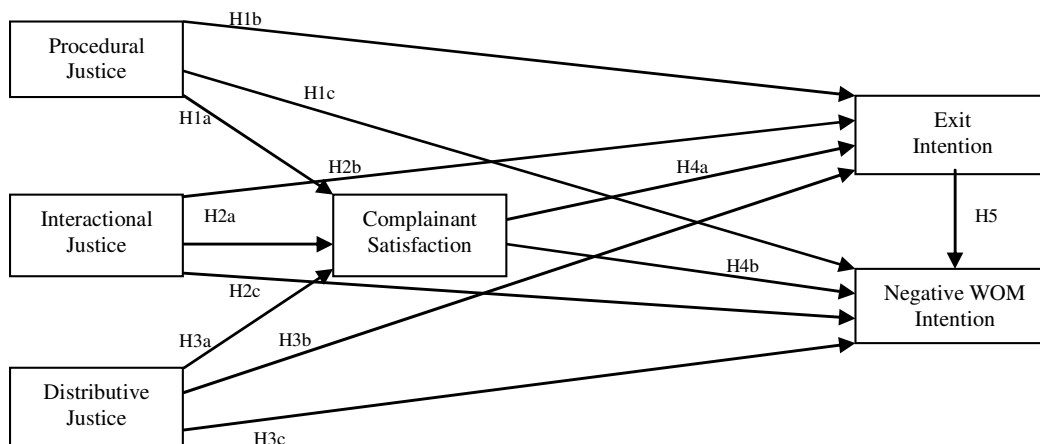
Figure 1. Proposed model and relationships.

positive attitudes toward their university's system. There-fore, these justice dimensions are considered as determi-nant attributes. They should thus be included in market-ing strategy development. The finding shows especially that these three justices are contributory factors for complainant satisfaction which in turn leads to exit intention and negative word of mouth. Also this meansthese dimensions play a major role in the student's attempt to assess specific university performance in approaching, formulating and solving their problems. Here, compliant satisfaction becomes a fundamental fea-ture and sometimes could be the largest reason for uni-versity exit. Some researchers may suggest that reasons such as cost, department, curriculum, advertising, brand and so forth are important to students as they attempt to judge the quality of a university before they experience. However, after entering into the education process all three dimensions come into stage and may become important determinant of the overall quality or vice versa.

In the heart of this planning should be to understand the wishes and complaints of the students and to establish a student-centered system. Procedural justices represent the universities' fair complaint procedures, transparent policies and some guidelines for students to give their complaints. As it is also mentioned in the literature related to complaints management (Gilly and Hansen, 1992) effective handling of complaints will provide and improve complaint satisfaction and loyalty to organizations. This means that the procedural justice can be used by university administrations to distinguish their education system by using various policies and guide-lines for handling and listening student problems. Also, these guides and guidelines can be used to establish a democratic and participative atmosphere in the univer-sities, make it more attractive to educate. It would be natual for the students to have education in such an atmosphere if it is possible.

The findings of this study further show that interactional

justice has a significant impact on complainant satisfac-ion. Interactional justice is the universities representa-ives' courtesy, sincerity and care shown to the students in handling their complaints. This means that the students' evaluations of a university are influenced by specific represenative performance characteristics. Therefore, great is the need to have operational policies to select, train and manage these representative faculties. If all the departments; especially the public relations or complaint department employ highly qualified and experienced faculty, it could provide the basis for a quality assurance.

Among these, distributive justice, which is related to the student's happiness and acceptance with the approp-riateness of the solutions suggested by the university found most influential on complainant satisfaction. This means that students could consider the exchange as trade-offs between the time, patience and energy they put (perceived sacrifice) and the outcome they gathered. Therefore, the administrations could identify the benefit and the cost for the performance judgments of students.

Parallel to the other studies the negative effect of complaint satisfaction on students' exit and negative word of mouth intentions has been found out (Blodgett et al., 1993; Hoffman and Kelley, 2000; Maxham III and Netemeyer, 2002; Davidow, 2003a).

Implications

This study recommends some practical applications to the administration bodies. It is suggested that to enhance their marketing strategies and their competition powers, the educational institutions in the context of this study should establish a student-centered complaint system. The first step can be to establish process and procedures related to students' complaints and to ensure that these systems work effectively and students' complaints are systematically conveyed to the related sections of uni-versity. If the students' complaints are perceived as an

attitude against the organization rather than as a means to develop the existing system, the system will not deve-lop, grow and its power of competition will be weakened. The result will be development of a system which does not know and care about its students' problems which even-tually may cause exit intention and negative word of mouth from the student side.

Besides, this study recommends the institutions to develop an effective communication with their students and to produce permanent and real solutions to their pro-blems. This study empirically proves that if these solu-tions are not produced it may cause exit intension and negative WOM about the universities. Thus, educating the personnel who deal with these complaints and even promoting those who find solutions will support these activities and can end up with much more positive results in enhancing the image of the universities and increasing their profits. As was mentioned before, the cost of keep-ing the existing customers (students) in place is much lower than the cost of finding the new ones.

Limitations and suggestions for further studies

The current study has some limitations. First of all this study does not cover the responses of organizations to students' complaints such as apology, attentiveness, re-dress, promptness, explanation, etc. (Davidow, 2000; 2003a; Karatepe and Ekiz, 2004) and has concentrated on students' perception of justice. While trying to recover the students' complaints, investigation of the effects of these organizational responses on justice dimensions, complaint satisfaction, negative WOM and exit intention will allow universities to use the marketing activities more effectively.

Second, this study has not covered the types of failure (outcome or process) and their magnitudes (high or low). Further studies may investigate the possible relationships between the types and magnitudes of failure and justice perception, complainant's satisfaction, repurchase and WOM intensions. Third, the data used in this study is collected through non-probability convenience sampling technique; to generalize the findings easily the further studies may use one of the probabilistic sampling tech-niques. Fourth, the samples for this study consisted of students holding Turkish nationality only. Including other nationalities may provide a chance of seeing the com-plete picture as well as providing an opportunity for a cross-cultural comparison of complaining behaviors and and justice perception of students of different nation-nalities.

Last, cross-cultural studies usually suffer from proble-ms related to the reliability and validity of measurement Measurement scale. In other words, the measurement scales developed in different cultural settings may not be applicable in other settings. Thus developing a specific measurement scale for Turkish culture and higher edu-cation industry in further studies can result in more rea-

listic findings (Kinyaz et al., 2002).

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